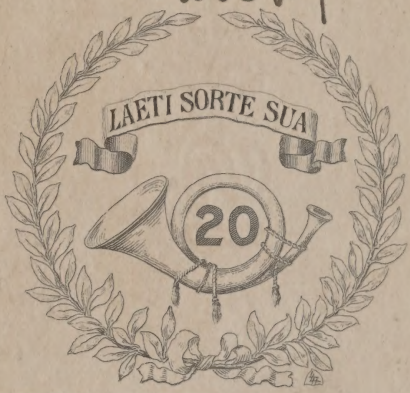
CONCORD CENTENNIAL DISCOURSE.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON.



A

HISTORICAL DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE CITIZENS OF CONCORD,

12TH SEPTEMBER, 1835,

ON THE

SECOND CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY OF THE

INCORPORATION OF THE TOWN.

BY

RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

REPUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

BOSTON:
FOR SALE BY W. B. CLARKE,
162 WASHINGTON STREET.

PRESS OF
RAND, AVERY, AND COMPANY,
117 FRANKLIN STREET,
BOSTON.

DISCOURSE.

Fellow-Citizens, — The town of Concord begins, this day, the third century of its history. By a common consent, the people of New England, for a few years past, as the second centennial anniversary of each of its early settlements arrived, have seen fit to observe the day. You have thought it becoming to commemorate the planting of the first inland town. The sentiment is just, and the practice is wise. Our ears shall not be deaf to the voice of time. We will review the deeds of our fathers, and pass that just verdict on them we expect from posterity on our own.

And yet, in the eternity of nature, how recent our antiquities appear! The imagination is impatient of a cycle so short. Who can tell how many thousand years, every day, the clouds have shaded these fields with their purple awning? The river by whose banks most of us were born, every winter, for ages, has spread its crust of ice over the great meadows which in ages it had formed. But the little society of men who now, for a few years, fish in this river, plough the fields it washes, mow the grass, and reap the corn, shortly shall hurry from its banks as did their forefathers. "Man's life," said the Witan to the Saxon king, "is the sparrow that enters at a window, flutters round the house, and flies out at another; and none know-

eth whence he came, or whither he goes." The more reason that we should give to our being what permanence we can; that we should recall the past, and expect the future.

Yet the race survives whilst the individual dies. In the country, without any interference of the law, the agricultural life favors the permanence of families. Here are still around me the lineal descendants of the first settlers of this town. Here is Blood, Flint, Willard, Meriam, Wood, Hosmer, Barrett, Wheeler, Jones, Brown, Buttrick, Brooks, Stow, Hoar, Heywood, Hunt, Miles, — the names of the inhabitants for the first thirty years; and the family is, in many cases, represented when the name is not. If the name of Bulkeley is wanting, the honor you have done me this day, in making me your organ, testifies your persevering kindness to his blood.

I shall not be expected, on this occasion, to repeat the details of that oppression which drove our fathers out hither. Yet the town of Concord was settled by a party of non-conformists immediately from Great Britain. The best friend the Massachusetts colony had, though much against his will, was Archbishop Laud in England. In consequence of his famous proclamation, setting up certain novelties in the rites of public worship, fifty godly ministers were suspended for contumacy in the course of two years and a half. Hindered from speaking, some of these dared to print the reasons of their dissent, and were punished with imprisonment or mutilation.* This severity brought some of the best men in England to overcome that natural repugnance to emigration, which holds the serious and moderate of every nation to their own soil. Among the silenced clergymen was a distinguished minister of Woodhill, in Bedfordshire, Rev. Peter Bulkeley, descended from a noble family, honored for his own vir-

* Neal's Hist. New England, vol. i. p. 132.

tues, his learning, and gifts as a preacher, and adding to his influence, the weight of a large estate.* Persecution readily knits friendship between its victims. Mr. Bulkeley, having turned his estate into money, and set his face towards New England, was easily able to persuade a good number of planters to join him. They arrived in Boston in 1634.† Probably there had been a previous correspondence with Gov. Winthrop, and an agreement that they should settle at Musketaquid. With them joined Mr. Simon Willard, a merchant from Kent, in England. They petitioned the General Court for a grant of a township; and on the 2d of September, 1635, corresponding, in new style, to 12th of September (two hundred years ago this day), leave to begin a plantation at Musketaquid was given to Peter Bulkeley, Simon Willard, and about twelve families more. A month later, Rev. John Jones, and a large number of settlers destined for the new town, arrived in Boston.‡

The grant of the General Court was but a preliminary step. The green meadows of Musketaquid, or *Grassy Brook*, were far up in the woods, not to be reached without a painful and dangerous journey through an uninterrupted wilderness. They could cross the Massachusetts or Charles River by the ferry at Newtown; they could go up the river as far as Watertown. But the Indian paths leading up and down the country were a foot broad. They must then plunge into the thicket, and with their axes cut a road for their teams, with their women and children, and their household stuff, forced to make long circuits, too, to avoid hills and swamps. Edward Johnson of Woburn has described in an affecting narrative their labors by the way. "Sometimes

* Neal's Hist. New England, vol. i. p. 321.
† Shattuck's Hist. of Concord, p. 158.
‡ Shattuck, p. 5.

passing through thickets where their hands are forced to make way for their bodies' passage, and their feet clambering over the crossed trees, which when they missed, they sunk into an uncertain bottom in water, and wade up to their knees, tumbling sometimes higher, sometimes lower. At the end of this, they meet a scorching plain, yet not so plain, but that the ragged bushes scratch their legs foully, even to wearing their stockings to their bare skin in two or three hours. Some of them, having no leggings, have had the blood trickle down at every step. And, in time of summer, the sun casts such a reflecting heat from the sweet-fern, whose scent is very strong, that some nearly fainted." They slept on the rocks, wherever the night found them. Much time was lost in travelling they knew not whither, when the sun was hidden by clouds; for "their compass miscarried in crowding through the bushes," and the Indian paths, once lost, they did not easily find.

Johnson, relating undoubtedly what he had himself heard from the Pilgrims, intimates that they consumed many days in exploring the country to select the best place for the town. Their first temporary accommodation was rude enough. "After they have found a place of abode, they burrow themselves in the earth for their first shelter, under a hillside, and, casting the soil aloft upon timber, they make a fire against the earth, at the highest side. And thus these poor servants of Christ provide shelter for themselves, their wives, and little ones, keeping off the short showers from their lodgings; but the long rains penetrate through, to their great disturbance in the night season. Yet in these poor wigwams they sing psalms, pray, and praise their God, till they can provide them houses, which they could not ordinarily, till the earth, by the Lord's blessing, brought forth bread to feed them. This they attain with sore travail, every one that can lift a hoe to strike into the earth, stand-

ing stoutly to his labors, and tearing up the roots and bushes from the ground, which, the first year, yielded them a lean crop, till the sod of the earth was rotten, and therefore they were forced to cut their bread very thin for a long season. But the Lord is pleased to provide for them great store of fish in the spring time, and especially alewives, about the bigness of a herring." * These served them also for manure. For flesh, they looked not for any, in those times, unless they could barter with the Indians for venison and raccoons. "Indian corn, even the coarsest, made as pleasant meal as rice." † All kinds of garden fruits grew well; "and let no man," writes our pious chronicler, in another place, "make a jest of pumpkins, for with this fruit the Lord was pleased to feed his people until their corn and cattle were increased." ‡

The great cost of cattle, and the sickening of their cattle upon such wild fodder as was never cut before, the loss of their sheep and swine by wolves, the sufferings of the people in the great snows, and cold soon following, and the fear of the Pequots, are the other disasters enumerated by the historian.

The hardships of the journey and of the first encampment are certainly related by their contemporary with some air of romance, yet they can scarcely be exaggerated. A march of a number of families, with their stuff, through twenty miles of unknown forest, from a little rising town that had not much to spare, to an Indian town in the wilderness that had nothing, must be laborious to all, and for those who were new to the country, and bred in softness, a formidable adventure. But the Pilgrims had the prepara-

* Johnson's Wonder Working Providence, chap. 35. I have abridged and slightly altered some sentences.

† Mourt, Beginning of Plymouth, 1621, p. 60.

‡ Johnson, p. 56.

tion of an armed mind, better than any hardihood of body. And the rough welcome which the new land gave them was a fit introduction to the life they must lead in it.

But what was their reception at Musketaquid? This was an old village of the Massachusetts Indians. Tahattawan, the sachem, with Waban, his son-in-law, lived near Nashawtuck, now Lee's Hill.* Their tribe, once numerous, the epidemic had reduced. Here they planted, hunted, and fished. The moose was still trotting in the country, and of his sinews they made their bowstring. Of the pith-elder, that still grows beside our brooks, they made their arrow. Of the Indian hemp, they spun their nets and lines for summer angling; and in winter they sat around holes in the ice, catching salmon, pickerel, breams, and perch, with which our river abounded.† Their physical powers as our fathers found them, and before yet the English alcohol had proved more fatal to them than the English sword, astonished the white men.‡ Their sight was so excellent, that, standing on the seashore, they often told of the coming of a ship at sea, sooner by one hour, yea two hours' sail, than any Englishman that stood by on purpose to look out.§ Roger Williams affirms, that he has known them run between eighty and a hundred miles in a summer's day, and back again within two days. A little pounded parched corn, or no-cake, sufficed them on the march. To his bodily perfection, the wild man added some noble traits of character. He was open as a child to kindness and justice. Many instances of his humanity were known to the Englishmen who suffered in the woods from sickness or cold. "When you came over the morning waters," said one of

* Shattuck, p. 3.

† Josselyn's Voyages to New England, 1638.

‡ Hutchinson's Hist. of Massachusetts, vol. i. chap. vi.

§ Thomas Morton: New Eng. Canaan, p. 47.

the sachems, "we took you into our arms. We fed you with our best meat. Never went white man cold and hungry from Indian wigwam."

The faithful dealing and brave good will, which, during the life of the friendly Massasoit, they uniformly experienced at Plymouth and at Boston, went to their hearts; so that the peace was made, and the ear of the savage already secured, before the Pilgrims arrived at his seat of Musketaquid to treat with him for his lands.

It is said that the covenant made with the Indians by Mr. Bulkeley and Major Willard was made under a great oak, formerly standing near the site of the Middlesex Hotel.* Our records affirm, that Squaw Sachem Tahattawan, and Nimrod, did sell a tract of six miles square to the English, receiving for the same some fathoms of Wampumpeag, hatchets, hoes, knives, cotton cloth, and shirts; Wibbacowet, the husband of squaw sachem, received a suit of cloth, a hat, a white linen band, shoes, stockings, and a great-coat; and, in conclusion, the said Indians declared themselves satisfied, and told the Englishmen they were welcome. And, after the bargain was concluded, Mr. Simon Willard, pointing to the four corners of the world, declared that they had bought three miles from that place, east, west, north, and south.†

The Puritans, to keep the remembrance of their unity one with another, and of their peaceful compact with the Indians, named their forest settlement CONCORD. They proceeded to build, under the shelter of the hill that extends for a mile along the north side of the Boston road, their first dwellings. The labors of a new plantation were paid by its excitements. I seem to see them, with their

* Shattuck, p. 6.

† Depositions taken in 1684, and copied in the first volume of the Town Records.

pious pastor, addressing themselves to the work of clearing the land. Natives of another hemisphere, they beheld with curiosity all the pleasing features of the American forest. The landscape before them was fair, if it was strange and rude. The little flower which at this season stars our woods and roadsides with its profuse blooms might attract even eyes as stern as theirs with its humble beauty. The useful pine lifted its cones into the frosty air. The maple, which is already making the forest gay with its orange hues, reddened over those houseless men. The majestic summits of Wachusett and Monadnoc towering in the horizon, invited the steps of adventure westward.

As the season grew later, they felt its inconveniences. "Many were forced to go barefoot and bareleg, and some in time of frost and snow; yet were they more healthy than now they are." * The land was low, but healthy; and if, in common with all the settlements, they found the air of America very cold, they might say with Higginson, after his description of the other elements, that "New England may boast of the element of fire more than all the rest; for all Europe is not able to afford to make so great fires as New England. A poor servant that is to possess but fifty acres may afford to give more wood for fire as good as the world yields, than many noblemen in England." † Many were their wants, but more their privileges. The light struggled in through windows of oiled paper; ‡ but they read the word of God by it. They were fain to make use of their knees for a table; but their limbs were their own. Hard labor and spare diet they had, and off wooden trenchers; but they had peace and freedom; and the wailing

* Johnson.

† New England's Plantation.

‡ E. W.'s Letter in Mourt, 1621.

of the tempest in the woods sounded kindlier in their ear than the smooth voice of the prelates at home in England. "There is no people," said their pastor to his little flock of exiles, "but will strive to excel in something. What can we excel in, if not in holiness? If we look to number, we are the fewest; if to strength, we are the weakest; if to wealth and riches, we are the poorest, of all the people of God through the whole world. We cannot excel, nor so much as equal, other people in these things; and, if we come short in grace and holiness too, we are the most despicable people under heaven. Strive we, therefore, herein to excel, and suffer not this crown to be taken away from us." * The sermon fell into good and tender hearts: the people conspired with their teacher. Their religion was sweetness and peace amidst toil and tears. And, as we are informed, "the edge of their appetite was greater to spiritual duties at their first coming, in time of wants, than afterwards."

The original town records for the first thirty years are lost. We have records of marriages and deaths, beginning nineteen years after the settlement; and copies of some of the doings of the town in regard to territory, of the same date; but the original distribution of the land, or an account of the principles on which it was divided, is not preserved. Agreeably to the custom of the times, a large portion was reserved to the public; and it appears from a petition of some new-comers, in 1643, that a part had been divided among the first settlers without price, on the single condition of improving it.† Other portions seem to have been successively divided off and granted to individuals, at the rate of sixpence or a shilling an acre. But, in the first

* Peter Bulkeley's Gospel Covenant: Preached at Concord in N. E. 2d Edition: London, 1651, p. 432.

† See the petition in Shattuck, p. 14.

years, the land would not pay the necessary public charges, and they seem to have fallen heavily on the few wealthy planters. Mr. Bulkeley, by his generosity, spent his estate; and, doubtless in consideration of his charges, the General Court, in 1639, granted him three hundred acres towards Cambridge; and to Mr. Spencer, probably for the like reason, three hundred acres by the Alewife River. In 1638, twelve hundred acres were granted to Gov. Winthrop, and a thousand to Thomas Dudley, of the lands adjacent to the town; and Gov. Winthrop selected as a building-spot the land near the house of Capt. Humphrey Hunt.* The first record now remaining is that of a reservation of land for the minister, and the appropriation of new lands as commons or pastures to some poor men. At the same date, in 1654, the town having divided itself into three districts, called the North, South, and East quarters, Ordered, "that the North quarter are to keep and maintain all their highways and bridges over the great river, in their quarter; and in respect of the greatness of their charge thereabout, and in regard of the ease of the East quarter, above the rest, in their highways, they are to allow the North quarter £3."†

Fellow-citizens, this first recorded political act of our fathers, this tax assessed on its inhabitants by a town, is the most important event in their civil history, implying, as it does, the exercise of a sovereign power, and connected with all the immunities and powers of a corporate town in Massachusetts. The greater speed and success that distinguish the planting of the human race in this country, over all other plantations in history, owe themselves, mainly, to the new subdivisions of the State into small corporations of land and power. It is vain to look for the inventor. No man made them. Each of the parts of that perfect structure grew out of the necessities of an instant occasion. The

* Shattuck, p. 14. † Town Records: Shattuck, p. 34.

germ was formed in England. The charter gave to the freemen of the company of Massachusetts Bay the election of the Governor and Council of Assistants. It, moreover, gave them the power of prescribing the manner in which freemen should be selected, and ordered that all fundamental laws should be enacted by the freemen of the colony. But the company removed to New England; more than one hundred freemen were admitted the first year, and it was found inconvenient to assemble them all.* And when, presently, the design of the colony began to fulfil itself by the settlement of new plantations in the vicinity of Boston, and parties, with grants of land, straggled into the country, to truck with the Indians, and to clear the land for their own benefit, the governor and freemen, in Boston, found it neither desirable nor possible to control the trade and practices of these farmers. What could the body of freemen, meeting four times a year at Boston, do for the daily wants of the planters at Musketaquid? The wolf was to be killed, the Indian to be watched and resisted, wells to be dug, the forest to be felled, pastures to be cleared, corn to be raised, roads to be cut, town and farm lines to be run. These things must be done, govern who might. The nature of man, and his condition in the world, for the first time within the period of certain history, controlled the formation of the State. The necessity of the colonists wrote the law. Their wants, their poverty, their manifest convenience, made them bold to ask of the Governor and of the General Court immunities, and, to certain purposes, sovereign powers. The townsmen's words were heard and weighed, for all knew that it was a petitioner that could not be slighted: it was the river, or the winter, or famine, or the Pequots, that spoke through them to the Governor and Council of Massachusetts Bay. Instructed by necessity,

* Bancroft: Hist. United States, vol. i. p. 389.

each little company organized itself after the pattern of the larger town, by appointing its constable and other petty half-military officers. As early as 1633,* the office of townsman, or *selectman*, appears, who seems first to have been appointed by the General Court, as here, at Concord, in 1639. In 1635, the Court say, "Whereas particular towns have many things which concern only themselves, it is Ordered, that the freemen of every town shall have power to dispose of their own lands and woods, and choose their own particular officers." † This pointed chiefly at the office of constable; but they soon chose their own selectmen, and very early assessed taxes, — a power at first resisted, ‡ but speedily confirmed to them.

Meantime, to this paramount necessity a milder and more pleasing influence was joined. I esteem it the happiness of this country, that its settlers, whilst they were exploring their granted and natural rights, and determining the power of the magistrate, were united by personal affection. Members of a church before whose searching covenant all rank was abolished, they stood in awe of each other as religious men. They bore to John Winthrop, the governor, a grave but hearty kindness. For the first time, men examined the powers of the chief whom they loved and revered. For the first time, the ideal social compact was real. The bands of love and reverence held fast the little state, whilst they untied the great cords of authority to examine their soundness, and learn on what wheels they ran. They were to settle the internal constitution of the towns, and, at the same time, their power in the commonwealth. The governor conspires with them in limiting his claims to their obedience, and values much more their love

* Savage's Winthrop, vol. i. p. 114.

† Colony Records, vol. i.

‡ See Hutchinson's Collection, p. 287.

than his chartered authority. The disputes between that forbearing man and the deputies are like the quarrels of girls, so much do they turn upon complaints of unkindness, and end in such loving reconciliations. It was on doubts concerning their own power, that, in 1634, a committee repaired to him for counsel; and he advised, seeing the freemen were grown so numerous, to send deputies from every town once in a year to revise the laws, and to assess all moneys.* And the General Court, thus constituted, only needed to go into separate session from the Council, as they did in 1644,† to become essentially the same assembly they are this day.

By this course of events, Concord and the other plantations found themselves separate and independent of Boston, with certain rights of their own, which what they were time alone could fully determine; enjoying at the same time a strict and loving fellowship with Boston, and sure of advice and aid on every emergency. Their powers were speedily settled by obvious convenience; and the towns learned to exercise a sovereignty in the laying of taxes, in the choice of their deputy to the house of representatives, in the disposal of the town lands, in the care of public worship, the school, and the poor, and, what seemed of at least equal importance, to exercise the right of expressing an opinion on every question before the country. In a town-meeting, the great secret of political science was uncovered, and the problem solved, how to give every individual his fair weight in the government, without any disorder from numbers. In a town-meeting, the roots of society were reached. Here the rich gave counsel, but the poor also, and, moreover, the just and the unjust. He is ill informed, who expects, on running down the town records

* Winthrop's Journal, vol. i. pp. 128, 129, and the editor's note.

† Winthrop's Journal, vol. ii. p. 160.

for two hundred years, to find a church of saints, a metropolis of patriots, enacting wholesome and creditable laws. The constitution of the towns forbid it. In this open democracy, every opinion had utterance; every objection, every fact, every acre of land, every bushel of rye, its entire weight. The moderator was the passive mouthpiece; and the vote of the town, like the vane on the turret overhead, free for every wind to turn, and always turned by the last and strongest breath. In these assemblies, the public weal, the call of interest, duty, religion, were heard; and every local feeling, every private grudge, every suggestion of petulance and ignorance, were not less faithfully produced. Wrath and love came up to town-meeting in company. By the law of 1641, every man, freeman or not, inhabitant or not, might introduce any business into a public meeting. Not a complaint occurs, in all the volumes of our records, of any inhabitant being hindered from speaking, or suffering from any violence or usurpation of any class. The negative ballot of a ten-shilling freeholder was as fatal as that of the honored owner of Blood's Farms or Willard's Purchase. A man felt himself at liberty to exhibit, at town-meeting, feelings and actions that he would have been ashamed of anywhere but amongst his neighbors. Individual protests are frequent. Peter Wright [1705] desired his dissent might be recorded from the town's grant to John Shepard.* In 1795, several town-meetings are called, upon the compensation to be made to a few proprietors for land taken in making a bridle road; and, one of them demanding large damages, many offers were made him in town-meeting, and refused; "which the town thought very unreasonable." The matters there debated are such as to invite very small considerations. The ill-spelled pages of the town records contain

* Concord Town Records.

the result. I shall be excused for confessing that I have set a value upon any symptom of meanness and private pique which I have met with in these antique books, as proof that justice was done; that, if the results of our history are approved as wise and good, it was yet a free strife; if the good counsel prevailed, the sneaking counsel did not fail to be suggested; freedom and virtue, if they triumphed, triumphed in a fair field. And so be it an everlasting testimony for them, and so much ground of assurance of man's capacity for self-government.

It is the consequence of this institution, that not a school-house, a public pew, a bridge, a pound, a mill-dam, hath been set up, or pulled down, or altered, or bought, or sold, without the whole population of this town having a voice in the affair. A general contentment is the result. And the people truly feel that they are lords of the soil. In every winding road, in every stone fence, in the smokes of the poor-house chimney, in the clock on the church, they read their own power, and consider, at leisure, the wisdom and error of their judgments.

The British Government has recently presented to the several public libraries of this country copies of the splendid edition of "The Domesday Book," and other ancient public records of England. I cannot but think that it would be a suitable acknowledgment of this national munificence, if the records of one of our towns — of this town, for example — should be printed, and presented to the governments of Europe; to the English nation as a thank-offering, and as a certificate of the progress of the Saxon race; to the continental nations as a lesson of humanity and love. Tell them the Union has twenty-four States, and Massachusetts is one; tell them Massachusetts has three hundred towns, and Concord is one; that in Concord are five hundred ratable polls, and every one has an equal vote.

About ten years after the planting of Concord, efforts began to be made to civilize the Indians, and "to win them to the knowledge of the true God." This, indeed, in so many words, is expressed in the charter of the colony as one of its ends; and this design is named first in the printed "Considerations"* that inclined Hampden, and determined Winthrop and his friends, to come hither. The interest of the Puritans in the natives was heightened by a suspicion, at that time prevailing, that these were the lost ten tribes of Israel. The man of the woods might well draw on himself the compassion of the planters. His erect and perfect form, though disclosing some irregular virtues, was found joined to a dwindled soul. Master of all sorts of woodcraft, he seemed part of the forest and the lake; and the secret of his amazing skill seemed to be, that he partook of the nature and fierce instincts of the beasts he slew. Those who dwelled by ponds and rivers had some tincture of civility; but the hunters of the tribe were found intractable at catechism. Thomas Hooker anticipated the opinion of Humboldt, and called them, "the ruins of mankind."

Early efforts were made to instruct them, in which Mr. Bulkeley, Mr. Flint, and Capt. Willard took an active part. In 1644, squaw sachem, the widow of Nanepashemet, the great sachem of Concord and Mistic, with two sachems of Wachusett, made a formal submission to the English Government, and intimated their desire, "as opportunity served, and the English lived among them, to learn to read God's word, and know God aright; and the General Court acted on their request.† John Eliot, in October, 1646, preached his first sermon in the Indian language at Noonantum; Waban, Tahattawan, and their sannaps, going thither from Concord to hear him. There, under the rub-

* Hutchinson's Collection, p.27. † Shattuck, p. 20.

bish and ruins of barbarous life, the human heart heard the voice of love, and awoke as from a sleep. The questions which the Indians put betray their reason and their ignorance. "Can Jesus Christ understand prayers in the Indian language?" "If a man be wise, and his sachem weak, must he obey him?" At a meeting which Eliot gave to the squaws apart, the wife of Wampooas propounded the question, "Whether do I pray when my husband prays, if I speak nothing as he doth, yet if I like what he saith?"—"which questions were accounted of by some as part of the whitenings of the harvest toward." * Tahattawan, our Concord sachem, called his Indians together, and bid them not oppose the courses which the English were taking for their good; for, said he, all the time you have lived after the Indian fashion, under the power of the higher sachems, what did they care for you? They took away your skins, your kettles, and your wampum, at their own pleasure; and this was all they regarded. But you may see the English mind no such things, but only seek your welfare, and, instead of taking away, are ready to give to you." Tahattawan and his son-in-law Waban besought Eliot to come and preach to them at Concord; and here they entered, by his assistance, into an agreement to twenty-nine rules, all breathing a desire to conform themselves to English customs.† They requested to have a town given them within the bounds of Concord, near unto the English. When this question was propounded by Tahattawan, he was asked why he desired a town so near, when there was more room for them up in the country. The sachem replied, that he knew, if the Indians dwelt far from the English, they would not so much care to pray, nor could they be so ready to hear the word of God, but would be all one Indians still; but, dwelling

* Shepard's Clear Sunshine of the Gospel. London, 1648.

† See them in Shattuck, p. 22.

near the English, he hoped it might be otherwise with them then. We, who see in the squalid remnants of the twenty tribes of Massachusetts the final failure of this benevolent enterprise, can hardly learn, without emotion, the earnestness with which the most sensible individuals of the copper race held on to the new hope they had conceived of being elevated to equality with their civilized brother. It is piteous to see their self-distrust in their request to remain near the English, and their unanimous entreaty to Capt. Willard to be their recorder, being very solicitous that what they did agree upon might be faithfully kept without alteration. It was remarkable that the preaching was not wholly new to them. "Their forefathers," the Indians told Eliot, "did know God; but after this, they fell into a deep sleep, and, when they did awake, they quite forgot him." *

At the instance of Eliot, in 1651, their desire was granted by the General Court; and Nashobah, lying near Nagog Pond, now partly in Littleton, partly in Acton, became an Indian town, where a Christian worship was established under an Indian ruler and teacher.† Wilson relates, that, at their meetings, "the Indians sung a psalm, made Indian by Eliot, in one of our ordinary English tunes, melodiously." ‡ Such was, for half a century, the success of the general enterprise, that, in 1676, there were five hundred and sixty-seven praying Indians, and, in 1689, twenty-four Indian preachers, and eighteen assemblies.

Meantime, Concord increased in territory and population. The lands were divided; highways were cut from farm to farm, and from this town to Boston. A military company had been organized in 1636. The Pequots, the terror of the farmer, were exterminated in 1637. Capt. Underhill, in 1638, declared, that "the new plantations of Dedham and Concord do afford large accommodation, and

* Shepard, p. 9. † Shattuck, p. 27. ‡ Wilson's Letter, 1651.

will contain abundance of people."* In 1639, our first selectmen, Mr. Flint, Lieut. Willard, and Richard Griffin, were appointed.† And in 1640, when the colony rate was £1,200, Concord was assessed £50.‡ The country already began to yield more than was consumed by the inhabitants.§ The very great immigration from England made the lands more valuable every year, and supplied a market for the produce. In 1643, the colony was so numerous, that it became expedient to divide it into four counties, Concord being included in Middlesex.‖ In 1644, the town contained sixty families.

But in 1640 all immigration ceased, and the country produce and farm-stock depreciated.¶ Other difficulties accrued. The fish, which had been the abundant manure of the settlers, was found to injure the land.** The river, at this period, seems to have caused some distress, now by its overflow, now by its drought.†† A cold and wet summer blighted the corn; enormous flocks of pigeons beat down and eat up all sorts of English grain; and the crops suffered much from mice.‡‡ New plantations and better land had been opened far and near; and whilst many of the colonists at Boston thought to remove, or did remove, to England, the Concord people became uneasy, and looked around for new seats. In 1643, one-seventh or one-eighth part of the inhabitants went to Connecticut with Rev. Mr. Jones, and settled Fairfield. Weakened by this loss, the people begged to be released from a part of their rates, to which the General Court consented.§§ Mr. Bulkeley dissuaded his people from removing, and admonished them to increase their faith with their griefs. Even this check

* News from America, p. 22.
† Shattuck, p. 19.
‡ Winthrop, vol. ii. p. 2.
§ Hutchinson, vol. i. p. 90.
‖ Hutchinson, vol. i. p. 112.
¶ Winthrop, vol. ii. p. 21.
** Hutchinson, vol. i. p. 94.
†† Bulkeley's Gos. Cov., p. 205.
‡‡ Winthrop, vol. ii. p. 94.
§§ Shattuck, p. 16.

which befell them acquaints us with the rapidity of their growth; for the good man, in dealing with his people, taxes them with luxury. "We pretended to come hither," he says, "for ordinances; but now ordinances are light matters with us: we are turned after the prey. We have among us excess and pride of life, — pride in apparel, daintiness in diet; and that in those who, in times past, would have been satisfied with bread. *This is the sin of the lowest of the people.*"* Better evidence could not be desired of the rapid growth of the settlement.

The check was but momentary. The earth teemed with fruits. The people on the bay built ships, and found the way to the West Indies, with pipe-staves, lumber, and fish; and the country people speedily learned how to supply themselves with sugar, tea, and molasses. The college had been already gathered in 1638. Now the schoolhouse went up. The General Court, in 1647, "to the end that learning may not be buried in the graves of our forefathers, Ordered, that every township, after the Lord had increased them to the number of fifty householders, shall appoint one to teach all children to write and read; and, where any town shall increase to the number of one hundred families, they shall set up a grammar school, the masters thereof being able to instruct youth so far as they may be fitted for the university."† With these requirements Concord not only complied, but, in 1653, subscribed a sum for several years to the support of Harvard College.‡

But a new and alarming public distress retarded the growth of this, as of the sister towns, during more than twenty years, — from 1654 to 1676. In 1654, the four united New England colonies agreed to raise two hundred and seventy foot and forty horse to reduce Ninigret, sachem of

* Gospel Covenant, p. 301.

† Bancroft, Hist. U. S., vol. i. p. 498. ‡ Shattuck, p. 45.

the Niantics, and appointed Major Simon Willard of this town to the command.* This war seems to have been pressed by three of the colonies, and reluctantly entered by Massachusetts. Accordingly, Major Willard did the least he could, and incurred the censure of the commissioners, who write to their "loving friend Major Willard," "that they leave to his consideration the inconveniences arising from his non-attendance to his commission."† This expedition was but the introduction of the war with King Philip. In 1670, the Wampanoags began to grind their hatchets, and mend their guns, and insult the English. Philip surrendered seventy guns to the commissioners in Taunton meeting-house, ‡ but revenged his humiliation a few years after, by carrying fire and the tomahawk into the English villages. From Narraganset to the Connecticut River, the scene of war was shifted as fast as these red hunters could traverse the forest. Concord was a military post. The inactivity of Major Willard in Ninigret's war had lost him no confidence. He marched from Concord to Brookfield, in season to save the people whose houses had been burned, and who had taken shelter in a fortified house.§ But he fought with disadvantage against an enemy who must be hunted before every battle. Some flourishing towns were burned. John Monoco, a formidable savage, boasted "that he had burned Medfield and Lancaster, and would burn Groton, Concord, Watertown, and Boston;" adding, "What me will, me do." He did burn Groton; but, before he had executed the remainder of his threat, he was hanged in Boston, in September, 1676.‖

* Hutchinson, vol. i. p. 172.

† See his instructions from the commissioners, his narrative, and the commissioners' letter to him, in Hutchinson's Collection, pp. 261–270.

‡ Hutchinson, Hist., vol. i. 254.

§ Hubbard, Indian Wars, p. 119, ed. 1801.

‖ Hubbard, p. 201.

A still more formidable enemy was removed, in the same year, by the capture of Canonchet, the faithful ally of Philip, who was soon afterwards shot at Stonington. He stoutly declared to the commissioners, that "he would not deliver up a Wampanoag, nor the paring of a Wampanoag's nail." And, when he was told that his sentence was death, he said "he liked it well that he was to die before his heart was soft, or he had spoken any thing unworthy of himself." *

We know beforehand who must conquer in that unequal struggle. The red man may destroy here and there a straggler, as a wild beast may; he may fire a farm-house or a village: but the association of the white men, and their arts of war, give them an overwhelming advantage; and, in the first blast of their trumpet, we already hear the flourish of victory. I confess what chiefly interests me in the annals of that war is the grandeur of spirit exhibited by a few of the Indian chiefs. A nameless Wampanoag, who was put to death by the Mohicans after cruel tortures, was asked by his butchers during the torture, how he liked the war. He said, "he found it as sweet as sugar was to Englishmen." †

The only compensation which war offers for its manifold mischiefs is in the great personal qualities to which it gives scope and occasion. The virtues of patriotism and of prodigious courage and address were exhibited, on both sides, and in many instances by women. The historian of Concord has preserved an instance of the resolution of one of the daughters of the town. Two young farmers, Abraham and Isaac Shepherd, had set their sister Mary, a girl of fifteen years, to watch whilst they threshed grain in the barn. The Indians stole upon her before she was aware; and her brothers were slain. She was carried captive into the Indian country; but at night, whilst her captors were asleep,

* Hubbard, p. 185. † Hubbard, p. 245.

she plucked a saddle from under the head of one of them, took a horse they had stolen from Lancaster, and, having girt the saddle on, she mounted, swam across the Nashua River, and rode through the forest to her home.*

With the tragical end of Philip the war ended. Beleaguered in his own country, his corn cut down, his piles of meal and other provision wasted by the English, it was only a great thaw in January, that, melting the snow, and opening the earth, enabled his poor followers to come at the ground-nuts, else they had starved. Hunted by Capt. Church, he fled from one swamp to another. His brother, his uncle, his sister, and his beloved squaw being taken or slain, he was at last shot down by an Indian deserter, as he fled alone, in the dark of the morning, not far from his own fort.†

Concord suffered little from the war. This is to be attributed, no doubt, in part, to the fact that troops were generally quartered here, and that it was the residence of many noted soldiers. Tradition finds another cause in the sanctity of its minister. The elder Bulkeley was gone. In 1659,‡ his bones were laid at rest in the forest; but the mantle of his piety and of the people's affection fell upon his son Edward, § the fame of whose prayers, it is said, once saved Concord from an attack of the Indian.‖ A great defence, undoubtedly, was the village of Praying Indians, until this settlement fell a victim to the envenomed prejudice against their countrymen. The worst feature in the history of those years is, that no man spake for the Indian. When the Dutch, or the French, or the English royalist, disagreed with the colony, there was always found a Dutch, or French, or Tory party — an earnest minority — to keep things from extremity. But the Indian seemed to inspire

* Shattuck, p. 55. † Hubbard, p. 260. ‡ Neal, Hist. N.E., vol. i. p. 321.
§ Mather, Magnalia, vol. i. p. 363. ‖ Shattuck, p. 59.

such a feeling as the wild beast inspires in the people near his den. It is the misfortune of Concord to have permitted a disgraceful outrage upon the friendly Indians settled within its limits, in February, 1676, which ended in their forcible expulsion from the town.

This painful incident is but too just an example of the measure which the Indians have generally received from the whites. For them the heart of charity, of humanity, was stone. After Philip's death, their strength was irrecoverably broken. They never more disturbed the interior settlements; and a few vagrant families, that are now pensioners on the bounty of Massachusetts, are all that is left of the twenty tribes.

> "Alas for them! their day is o'er;
> Their fires are out from hill and shore;
> No more for them the wild deer bounds;
> The plough is on their hunting-grounds;
> The pale man's axe rings in their woods;
> The pale man's sail skims o'er their floods;
> Their pleasant springs are dry." *

I turn gladly to the progress of our civil history. Before 1666, fifteen thousand acres had been added by grants of the General Court to the original territory of the town, † so that Concord then included the greater part of the towns of Bedford, Acton, Lincoln, and Carlisle.

In the great growth of the country, Concord participated, as is manifest from its increasing polls and increased rates. Randolph at this period writes to the English Government, concerning the country towns, "The farmers are numerous and wealthy, live in good houses, are given to hospitality, and make good advantage by their corn, cattle, poultry, butter, and cheese." ‡ Edward Bulkeley was the pastor, until

* Sprague's Centennial Ode. ‡ Hutchinson's Collection, p. 484.
† Shattuck.

his death, in 1696. His youngest brother, Peter, was deputy from Concord, and was chosen speaker of the house of deputies in 1676. The following year, he was sent to England, with Mr. Stoughton, as agent for the colony; and on his return, in 1685, was a royal councillor. But I am sorry to find that the servile Randolph speaks of him with marked respect.* It would seem that his visit to England had made him a courtier. In 1689, Concord partook of the general indignation of the province against Andros. A company marched to the capital, under Lieut. Heald, forming a part of that body, concerning which we are informed, "The country people came armed into Boston, on the afternoon (of Thursday, 18th April), in such rage and heat as made us all tremble to think what would follow; for nothing would satisfy them, but that the governor must be bound in chains or cords, and put in a more secure place; and that they would see done before they went away; and, to satisfy them, he was guarded by them to the fort." † But the town records of that day confine themselves to descriptions of lands, and to conferences with the neighboring towns to run boundary lines. In 1699, so broad was their territory, I find the selectmen running the lines with Chelmsford, Cambridge, and Watertown.‡ Some interesting peculiarities in the manners and customs of the time appear in the town's books. Proposals of marriage were made by the parents of the parties, and minutes of such private agreements sometimes entered on the clerk's records.§ The public charity seems to have been bestowed in a manner now obsolete. The town lends its commons as pastures to poor men; and, "being informed of the great present want of Thomas Pellit, gave order to Stephen Hosmer to deliver a town cow, of a black

* Hutchinson's Coll., pp. 543, 548, 557, 566.

† Hutchinson's Hist., vol. i. p. 336.

‡ Town Records. § See Appendix, Note A, March and April.

color, with a white face, unto said Pellit, for his present support." *

From the beginning to the middle of the eighteenth century, our records indicate no interruption of the tranquillity of the inhabitants, either in church or in civil affairs. After the death of Rev. Mr. Estabrook, in 1711, it was propounded at the town meeting, "whether one of the three gentlemen lately improved here in preaching, namely, Mr. John Whiting, Mr. Holyoke, and Mr. Prescott, shall be now chosen in the work of the ministry. Voted affirmatively." † Mr. Whiting, who was chosen, was, we are told in his epitaph, "a universal lover of mankind." The charges of education and of legislation at this period seem to have afflicted the town; for they vote to petition the General Court to be eased of the law relating to providing a schoolmaster. Happily, the Court refused; and in 1712 the selectmen agreed with Capt. James Minott, "for his son Timothy to keep the school at the schoolhouse, for the town of Concord, for half a year, beginning 2d June; and, if any scholar shall come within the said time for larning exceeding his son's ability, the said captain doth agree to instruct them himself in the tongues, till the above said time be fulfilled; for which service the town is to pay Capt. Minott ten pounds."‡ Capt. Minott seems to have served our prudent fathers in the double capacity of teacher and representative. It is an article in the selectmen's warrant for the town meeting, "to see if the town will lay in for a representative not exceeding four pounds." Capt. Minott was chosen, and, after the General Court was adjourned, received of the town, for his services, an allowance of three shillings per day. The country was not yet so thickly settled, but that the inhabitants suffered from wolves and wild-cats, which infested the woods; since

* Records, July, 1698. † Records, Nov., 1711. ‡ Records, May, 1712.

bounties of twenty shillings are given, as late as 1735, to Indians and whites for the heads of these animals, after the constable has cut off the ears.*

Mr. Whiting was succeeded in the pastoral office by Rev. Daniel Bliss, in 1738. Soon after his ordination, the town seems to have been divided by ecclesiastical discords. In 1741, the celebrated Whitefield preached here, in the open air, to a great congregation. Mr. Bliss heard that great orator with delight, and, by his earnest sympathy with him in opinion and practice, gave offence to a part of his people. Party and mutual counsels were called; but no grave charge was made good against him. I find in the church records the charges preferred against him, his answer thereto, and the result of the council. The charges seem to have been made by the lovers of order and moderation against Mr. Bliss as a favorer of religious excitements. His answer to one of the counts breathes such true piety, that I cannot forbear to quote it. The ninth allegation is, "That in praying for himself, in a church meeting, in December last, he said 'he was a poor vile worm of the dust, that was allowed as mediator between God and this people.'" To this, Mr. Bliss replied, "In the prayer you speak of, Jesus Christ was acknowledged as the only Mediator between God and man; at which time I was filled with wonder, that such a sinful and worthless worm as I am was allowed to represent Christ in any manner, even so far as to be bringing the petitions and thank-offerings of the people unto God, and God's will and truths to the people, and used the word mediator in some differing light from that you have given it; but I confess I was soon uneasy that I had used the word, lest some would put a wrong meaning thereupon." † The council admonished Mr. Bliss of some improprieties of expression, but bore

* Records, 1735. † Church Records, July, 1742.

witness to his purity and fidelity in his office. In 1764, Whitefield preached again at Concord, on Sunday afternoon. Mr. Bliss preached in the morning, and the Concord people thought their minister gave them the better sermon of the two. It was also his last.

The planting of the colony was the effect of religious principle. The Revolution was the fruit of another principle, — the devouring thirst for justice. From the appearance of the article in the selectmen's warrant, in 1765, "to see if the town will give the representative any instructions about any important affair to be transacted by the General Court, concerning the Stamp Act," * to the peace of 1783, the town records breathe a resolute and warlike spirit, so bold from the first as hardly to admit of increase.

It would be impossible, on this occasion, to recite all these patriotic papers. I must content myself with a few brief extracts. On the 24th of January, 1774, in answer to letters received from the united committees of correspondence in the vicinity of Boston, the town say, —

"We cannot possibly view with indifference the past and present obstinate endeavors of the enemies of this, as well as the mother country, to rob us of those rights that are the distinguishing glory and felicity of this land, — rights that we are obliged to no power under heaven for the enjoyment of, as they are the fruit of the heroic enterprises of the first settlers of these American colonies. And though we cannot but be alarmed at the great majority in the British parliament, for the imposition of unconstitutional taxes on the colonies, yet it gives life and strength to every attempt to oppose them, that not only the people of this, but the neighboring, provinces are remarkably united in the important and interesting opposition, which, as it succeeded before, in some measure, by the blessing

* Records.

of Heaven, so we cannot but hope it will be attended with still greater success in future.

"*Resolved*, That these colonies have been, and still are, illegally taxed by the British parliament, as they are not virtually represented therein.

"That the purchasing commodities subject to such illegal taxation is an explicit, though an impious and sordid resignation of the liberties of this free and happy people.

"That as the British parliament have empowered the East India Company to export their tea into America for the sole purpose of raising a revenue from hence, to render the design abortive, we will not, in this town, either by ourselves, or any from or under us, buy, sell, or use any of the East India Company's tea, or any other tea, whilst there is a duty for raising a revenue thereon in America; neither will we suffer any such tea to be used in our families.

"That all such persons as shall purchase, sell, or use any such tea, shall for the future be deemed unfriendly to the happy constitution of this country.

"That, in conjunction with our brethren in America, we will risk our fortunes, and even our lives, in defence of his Majesty, King George the Third, his person, crown, and dignity; and will also, with the same resolution, as his free-born subjects in this country, to the utmost of our power, defend all our rights inviolate to the latest posterity.

"That if any person or persons, inhabitants of this province, so long as there is a duty on tea, shall import any tea from the India House in England, or be factors for the East India Company, we will treat them, in an eminent degree, as enemies to their country, and with contempt and detestation.

"That we think it our duty, at this critical time of our public affairs, to return our hearty thanks to the town of Boston for every rational measure they have taken for the

preservation or recovery of our invaluable rights and liberties infringed upon; and we hope, should the state of our public affairs require it, that they will still remain watchful and persevering, with a steady zeal to espy out every thing that shall have a tendency to subvert our happy constitution." *

On the 27th of June, near three hundred persons, upwards of twenty-one years of age, inhabitants of Concord, entered into a covenant, "solemnly engaging with each other, in the presence of God, to suspend all commercial intercourse with Great Britain, until the act for blocking the harbor of Boston be repealed; and neither to buy nor consume any merchandise imported from Great Britain, nor to deal with those who do." †

In August, a county convention met in this town to deliberate upon the alarming state of public affairs, and published an admirable report.‡ In September, incensed at the new royal law, which made the judges dependent on the crown, the inhabitants assembled on the common, and forbade the justices to open the Court of Sessions. This little town then assumed the sovereignty. It was judge and jury, and council and king. On the 26th of the month, the whole town resolved itself into a committee of safety, "to suppress all riots, tumults, and disorders in said town, and to aid all untainted magistrates in the execution of the laws of the land." § It was then voted to raise one or more companies of minute-men, by enlistment, to be paid by the town whenever called out of town; and to provide arms and ammunition, "that those who are unable to purchase them themselves may have the advantage of them, if necessity calls for it. ‖ In October, the Provincial Congress met in Concord: John Hancock was president. This body

* Town Records. ‡ See the Report in Shattuck, p. 82.
† Town Records. § Records. ‖ Records.

was composed of the foremost patriots, and adopted those efficient measures, whose progress and issue belong to the history of the nation.*

The clergy of New England were, for the most part, zealous promoters of the Revolution. A deep religious sentiment sanctified the thirst for liberty. All the military movements in this town were solemnized by acts of public worship. In January, 1775, a meeting was held for the enlisting of minute-men. Rev. William Emerson, the chaplain of the Provincial Congress, preached to the people. Sixty men enlisted, and, in a few days, many more. On 13th of March, at a general review of all the military companies, he preached to a very full assembly, taking for his text, 2 Chron. xiii. 12, "And, behold, God himself is with us for our captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you."* It is said that all the services of that day made a deep impression on the people, even to the singing of the psalm.

A large amount of military stores had been deposited in this town by order of the Provincial Committee of Safety. It was to destroy those stores that the troops who were attacked in this town on the 19th of April, 1775, were sent hither by Gen. Gage.

The story of that day is well known. In these peaceful fields, for the first time since a hundred years, the drum and alarm-gun were heard; and the farmers snatched down their rusty firelocks from the kitchen-walls to make good the resolute words of their town debates. In the field where the western abutment of the old bridge may still be seen, about half a mile from this spot, the first organized resistance was made to the British arms. There the Americans first shed British blood. Eight hundred British sol-

* Bradford, Hist. Massachusetts, vol. i. p. 353.

† Rev. W. Emerson's MS. Journal.

diers, under the command of Lieut.-Col. Francis Smith, had marched from Boston to Concord; at Lexington had fired upon the brave handful of militia, for which a speedy revenge was reaped by the same militia in the afternoon. When they entered Concord, they found the militia and minute-men assembled under the command of Col. Barrett and Major Buttrick. This little battalion, though, in their hasty council, some were urgent to stand their ground, retreated before the enemy to the high land on the other bank of the river, to wait for re-enforcement. Col. Barrett ordered the troops not to fire unless fired upon. The British, following them across the bridge, posted three companies, amounting to about one hundred men, to guard the bridge, and secure the return of the plundering party. Meantime, the men of Acton, Bedford, Lincoln, and Carlisle, all once included in Concord, remembering their parent town in the hour of danger, arrived, and fell into the ranks so fast, that Major Buttrick found himself superior in number to the enemy's party at the bridge. And, when the smoke began to rise from the village where the British were burning cannon-carriages and military stores, the Americans resolved to force their way into town. The English beginning to pluck up some of the planks of the bridge, the Americans quickened their pace, and the British fired one or two shots up the river (our ancient friend here, Master Blood, saw the water struck by the first ball); then a single gun, the ball from which wounded Luther Blanchard and Jonas Brown; and then a volley, by which Capt. Isaac Davis, and Abner Hosmer of Acton, were instantly killed. Major Buttrick leaped from the ground, and gave the command to fire, which was repeated in a simultaneous cry by all his men. The Americans fired, and killed two men, and wounded eight. A head stone and a foot stone, on this bank of the river, mark the place where

these first victims lie. The British retreated immediately towards the village, and were joined by two companies of grenadiers, whom the noise of the firing had hastened to the spot. The militia and minute-men — every one from that moment being his own commander — ran over the hills opposite the battlefield, and across the great fields, into the east quarter of the town, to waylay the enemy, and annoy his retreat. The British, as soon as they were rejoined by the plundering detachment, began that disastrous retreat to Boston, which was an omen to both parties, of the event of the war.

In all the anecdotes of that day's events we may discern the natural action of the people. It was not an extravagant ebullition of feeling, but might have been calculated on by any one acquainted with the spirits and habits of our community. Those poor farmers who came up that day to defend their native soil acted from the simplest instincts. They did not know it was a deed of fame they were doing. These men did not babble of glory: they never dreamed their children would contend who had done the most. They supposed they had a right to their corn and their cattle, without paying tribute to any but their own governors. And as they had no fear of man, they yet did have a fear of God. Capt. Charles Miles, who was wounded in the pursuit of the enemy, told my venerable friend who sits by me, "that he went to the services of that day, with the same seriousness, and acknowledgment of God, which he carried to church."

The presence of these aged men who were in arms on that day seems to bring us nearer to it. The benignant Providence which has prolonged their lives to this hour gratifies the strong curiosity of the new generation. The Pilgrims are gone; but we see what manner of persons they were who stood in the worst perils of the Revolution.

We hold by the hand the last of the invincible men of old, and confirm from living lips the sealed records of time.

And you, my fathers, whom God and the history of your country have ennobled, may well bear a chief part in keeping this peaceful birthday of our town. You are indeed extraordinary heroes. If ever men in arms had a spotless cause, you had. You have fought a good fight; and, having quit you like men in the battle, you have quit yourselves like men in your virtuous families, in your cornfields, and in society. We will not hide your honorable gray hairs under perishing laurel-leaves; but the eye of affection and veneration follows you. You are set apart, and forever, for the esteem and gratitude of the human race. To you belongs a better badge than stars and ribbons. This prospering country is your ornament; and this expanding nation is multiplying your praise with millions of tongues.

The agitating events of those days were duly remembered in the church. On the second day after the affray, divine service was attended in this house by seven hundred soldiers. William Emerson the pastor had a hereditary claim to the affection of the people, being descended, in the fourth generation, from Edward Bulkeley, son of Peter. But he had merits of his own. The cause of the colonies was so much in his heart, that he did not cease to make it the subject of his preaching and his prayers, and is said to have deeply inspired many of his people with his own enthusiasm. He, at least, saw clearly the pregnant consequences of the 19th of April. I have found within a few days, among some family papers, his almanac of 1775 in a blank leaf of which he has written a narrative of the fight;* and, at the close of the month, he writes, "This month remarkable for the greatest events of the present

* See the Appendix, Note B.

age." To promote the same cause, he asked and obtained of the town leave to accept the commission of chaplain to the Northern army at Ticonderoga, and died, after a few months, of the distemper that prevailed in the camp.

In the whole course of the war, the town did not depart from this pledge it had given. Its little population of thirteen hundred souls behaved like a party to the contest. The number of its troops constantly in service is very great. Its pecuniary burdens are out of all proportion to its capital. The economy so rigid, which marked its earlier history, has all vanished. It spends profusely, affectionately, in the service. "Since," say the plaintive records, "Gen. Washington, at Cambridge, is not able to give but 24*s.* per cord for wood for the army, it is voted, That this town encourage the inhabitants to supply the army, by paying two dollars per cord, over and above the general's price, to such as shall carry wood thither;" * and 210 cords of wood were carried.† A similar order is taken respecting hay. Whilst Boston was occupied by the British troops, Concord contributed to the relief of the inhabitants £70 in money, 225 bushels of grain, and a quantity of meat and wood. When, presently, the poor of Boston were quartered by the Provincial Congress on the neighboring country, Concord received 82 persons to its hospitality. ‡ In the year 1775, it raised 100 minute-men and 74 soldiers to serve at Cambridge. In March, 1776, 145 men were raised by this town to serve at Dorchester Heights.§ In June, the General Assembly of Massachusetts resolved to raise 5,000 militia for six months, to re-enforce the Continental army. "The numbers," say they," are large; but this court has the fullest assurance, that their brethren, on this occasion, will not confer with flesh and blood, but will, without hesitation,

* Records, December, 1775.
† Shattuck, p. 125.
‡ Shattuck, p. 125.
§ Shattuck, p. 124.

and with the utmost alacrity and despatch, fill up the numbers proportioned to the several towns." * On that occasion, Concord furnished 67 men, paying them itself, at an expense of £622, and so on, with every levy, to the end of the war. For these men it was continually providing shoes, stockings, shirts, coats, blankets, and beef. The taxes, which, before the war, had not much exceeded £200 per annum, amounted, in the year 1782, to $9,544 in silver. †

The great expense of the war was borne with cheerfulness whilst the war lasted; but years passed, after the peace, before the debt was paid As soon as danger and injury ceased, the people were left at leisure to consider their poverty and their debts. The town records show how slowly the inhabitants recovered from the strain of excessive exertion. Their instructions to their representatives are full of loud complaints of the disgraceful state of public credit, and the excess of public expenditure. They may be pardoned, under such distress, for the mistakes of an extreme frugality. They fell into common error, not yet dismissed to the moon, that the remedy was to forbid the great importation of foreign commodities, and to prescribe by law the prices of articles. The operation of a new government was dreaded, lest it should prove expensive; and the country towns thought it would be cheaper if it were removed from the capital. They were jealous lest the General Court should pay itself too liberally; and our fathers must be forgiven by their charitable posterity, if, in 1782, before choosing a representative, it was Voted, that the person who should be chosen representative to the General Court should receive 6*s*. per day whilst in actual service, an account of which time he should bring to the town, and if it should be that the General Court should resolve that

* Bradford, History of Massachusetts, vol. ii. p. 113. † Shattuck, p. 126.

their pay should be more than 6*s.*, then the representative shall be hereby directed to pay the overplus into the town treasury." * This was securing the prudence of the public servants.

But, whilst the town had its own full share of the public distress, it was very far from desiring relief at the cost of order and law. In 1786, when the general sufferings drove the people in parts of Worcester and Hampshire Counties to insurrection, a large party of armed insurgents arrived in this town, on the 12th of September, to hinder the sitting of the Court of Common Pleas. But they found no countenance here.† The same people who had been active in a county convention to consider grievances condemned the rebellion, and joined the authorities in putting it down. In 1787, the admirable instructions given by the town to its representative are a proud monument of the good sense and good feeling that prevailed. The grievances ceased with the adoption of the Federal Constitution. The constitution of Massachusetts had been already accepted. It was put to the town of Concord, in October, 1776, by the legislature, whether the existing house of representatives should enact a constitution for the State. The town answered, No.‡ The General Court, notwithstanding, draughted a constitution, sent it here, and asked the town whether they would have it for the law of the State. The town answered No by a unanimous vote. In 1780, a constitution of the State, proposed by the convention chosen for that purpose, was accepted by the town, with the reservation of some articles.§ And in 1788 the town, by its delegate, accepted the new constitution of the United States ; and this event closed the whole series of important public events in which this town played a part.

* Records, May 3.

† Bradford, Hist. Massachusetts, vol. i. p. 266, and Records, 9 September.

‡ Records, 21 October. § Records, 7 May.

From that time to the present hour, this town has made a slow but constant progress in population and wealth, and the arts of peace. It has suffered neither from war, nor pestilence, nor famine, nor flagrant crime. Its population in the census of 1830 was 2,020 souls. The public expenses for the last year amounted to $4,290; for the present year, to $5,040.* If the community stints its expense in small matters, it spends freely on great duties. The town raises this year $1,800 for its public schools, besides about $1,200, which are paid by subscription for private schools. This year, it expends $800 for its poor; the last year, it expended $900. Two religious societies of differing creed dwell together in good understanding, both promoting, we hope, the cause of righteousness and love. Concord has always been noted for its ministers. The living need no praise of mine; yet it is among the sources of satisfaction and gratitude this day, that the aged, with whom is wisdom, our fathers' counsellor and friend, is spared to counsel and intercede for the sons.

Such, fellow-citizens, is an imperfect sketch of the history of Concord. I have been greatly indebted, in preparing this sketch, to the printed, but unpublished, History of this town, furnished me by the unhesitating kindness of its author, long a resident in this place. I hope that History will not long remain unknown. The author has done us and posterity a kindness by the zeal and patience of his research, and has wisely enriched his pages with the resolutions, addresses, and instructions to its agents, which from time to time, at critical periods, the town has voted. Meantime, I have read with care the town records themselves. They must ever be the fountains of all just information respecting your character and customs. They are the history of the town. They exhibit a pleasing picture of a community

* Records, 1834 and 1835.

almost exclusively agricultural, where no man has much time for words in his search after things, — of a community of great simplicity of manners, and of a manifest love of justice. For the most part, the town has deserved the name it wears. I find our annals marked with a uniform good sense. I find no ridiculous laws, no eaves-dropping legislators, no hanging of witches, no ghosts, no whipping of Quakers, no unnatural crimes. The tone of the records rises with the dignity of the event. These soiled and musty books are luminous and electric within. The old town clerks did not spell very correctly; but they contrive to make pretty intelligible the will of a free and just community. Frugal our fathers were, — very frugal, — though, for the most part, they deal generously by their minister, and provide well for the schools and the poor. If at any time, in common with most of our towns, they have carried this economy to the verge of a vice, it is to be remembered that a town is, in many respects, a financial corporation. They economize, that they may sacrifice ; they stint and higgle on the price of a pew, that they may send two hundred soldiers to Gen. Washington to keep Great Britain at bay. For splendor, there must somewhere be rigid economy. That the head of the house may go brave, the members must be plainly clad ; and the town must save, that the State may spend. Of late years, the growth of Concord has been slow. Without navigable waters, without mineral riches, without any considerable mill privileges, the natural increase of her population is drained by the constant emigration of the youth. Her sons have settled the region around us, and far from us. Their wagons have rattled down the remote western hills. And in every part of this country, and in many foreign parts, they plough the earth, they traverse the sea, they engage in trade, and in all the professions.

Fellow-citizens, let not the solemn shadows of two hundred years this day fall over us in vain. I feel some unwillingness to quit the remembrance of the past. With all the hope of the new, I feel that we are leaving the old. Every moment carries us farther from the two great epochs of public principle, — the planting, and the revolution, of the colony. Fortunate and favored this town has been in having received so large an infusion of the spirit of both of those periods. Humble as is our village in the circle of later and prouder towns that whiten the land, it has been consecrated by the presence and activity of the purest men. Why need I remind you of our own Hosmers, Minotts, Cumings, Barretts, Beattons, the departed benefactors of the town? On the village green have been the steps of Winthrop and Dudley; of John Eliot the Indian apostle, who had a courage that intimidated those savages whom his love could not melt; of Whitefield, whose silver voice melted his great congregation into tears; of Hancock, and his compatriots of the Provincial Congress; of Langdon, and the college over which he presided. But even more sacred influences than these have mingled here with the stream of human life. The merit of those who fill a space in the world's history, who are borne forward, as it were, by the weight of thousands whom they lead, sheds a perfume less sweet than do the sacrifices of private virtue. I have had much opportunity of access to anecdotes of families; and I believe this town to have been the dwelling-place, in all times since its planting, of pious and excellent persons, who walked meekly through the paths of common life, who served God and loved man, and never let go the hope of immortality. The benediction of their prayers and of their principles lingers around us. The acknowledgment of the Supreme Being exalts the history of this people; it brought the fathers hither; in a war of

principle, it delivered their sons: and so long as a spark of this faith survives among the children's children, so long shall the name of Concord be honest and venerable.

APPENDIX.

NOTE A. — See p. 27.

The following minutes from the town records in 1692 may serve as an example : —

John Craggin, aged about 63 years, and Sarah his wife, aet. about 63 years, do both testify upon oath, that, about 2 years ago, John Shepard, sen. of Concord, came to our house in Obourne, to treat with us, and give us a visit, and carried the said Sary Craggin to Concord with him, and there discoursed us in order to a marriage between his son, John Shepard, Jr. and our daughter, Eliz. Craggin, and, for our incouragement, and before us, did promise, that, upon the consummation of the said marriage, he, the said John Shepard, sen. would give to his son, John Shepard, jun. the one half of his dwelling house, and the old barn, and the pasture before the barn ; the old plow-land, and the old horse, when his colt was fit to ride, and his old oxen, when his steers were fit to work. All this he promised upon marriage as above said, which marriage was consummated upon March following, which is two years ago, come next March, Dated Feb. 25, 1692. Taken on oath before me, Wm. Johnson.

NOTE B. — See p. 36.

The importance which the skirmish at Concord Bridge derived from subsequent events, has, of late years, attracted much notice to the incidents of the day. There are, as might be expected,

some discrepancies in the different narratives of the fight. In the brief summary in the text, I have relied mainly on the depositions taken by order of the Provincial Congress within a few days after the action, and on the other contemporary evidence. I have consulted the English narrative in the Massachusetts Historical Collections, and in the trial of Horne (Cases adjudged in King's Bench; London, 1800, vol. ii. p. 677), the inscription made, by order of the legislature of Massachusetts, on the two field-pieces presented to the Concord artillery, Mr. Phinney's History of the Battle at Lexington, Dr. Ripley's History of Concord Fight, Mr. Shattuck's narrative in his History, besides some oral and some manuscript evidence of eye-witnesses. The following narrative, written by Rev. William Emerson, a spectator of the action, has never been published. A part of it has been in my possession for years; a part of it I discovered, only a few days since, in a trunk of family papers.

1775, 19 April. This morning, between one and two o'clock, we were alarmed by the ringing of the bell, and upon examination found that the troops, to the number of eight hundred, had stolen their march from Boston, in boats and barges, from the bottom of the Common over to a point in Cambridge, near to Inman's Farm, and were at Lexington meeting-house half an hour before sunrise, where they had fired upon a body of our men, and, as we afterward heard, had killed several. This intelligence was brought us first by Dr. Samuel Prescott, who narrowly escaped the guard that were sent before on horses, purposely to prevent all posts and messengers from giving us timely information. He, by the help of a very fleet horse, crossing several walls and fences, arrived at Concord at the time above mentioned, when several posts were immediately despatched, that, returning, confirmed the account of the regulars' arrival at Lexington, and that they were on their way to Concord. Upon this, a number of our minute-men belonging to this town and Acton and Lyncoln, with several others that were in readiness, marched out to meet them, while the alarm company were preparing to receive them in the town. Capt. Minot, who commanded them, thought it proper to take possession of the hill above the meeting-house as the most advantageous situ-

ation. No sooner had our men gained it, than we were met by the companies that were sent out to meet the troops, who informed us that they were just upon us, and that we must retreat, as their number was more than treble ours. We then retreated from the hill near the Liberty Pole, and took a new post back of the town, upon an eminence, where we formed into two battalions, and waited the arrival of the enemy. Scarcely had we formed, before we saw the British troops, at the distance of a quarter of a mile, glittering in arms, advancing towards us with the greatest celerity. Some were for making a stand, notwithstanding the superiority of their number; but others, more prudent, thought best to retreat, till our strength should be equal to the enemy's, by recruits from neighboring towns that were continually coming in to our assistance. Accordingly, we retreated over the bridge. The troops came into the town, set fire to several carriages for the artillery, destroyed sixty barrels of flour, rifled several houses, took possession of the town-house, destroyed five hundred pounds of balls, set a guard of a hundred men at the North Bridge, and sent up a party to the house of Col. Barrett, where they were in expectation of finding a quantity of warlike stores. But these were happily secured, just before their arrival, by transportation into the woods and other by-places. In the mean time, the guard set by the enemy to secure the posts at the North Bridge were alarmed by the approach of our people, who had retreated, as mentioned before, and were now advancing, with special orders not to fire upon the troops unless fired upon. These orders were so punctually observed, that we received the fire of the enemy in three several and separate discharges of their pieces before it was returned by our commanding officer. The firing then soon become general for several minutes, in which skirmish two were killed on each side, and several of the enemy wounded. It may here be observed, by the way, that we were the more cautious to prevent beginning a rupture with the king's troops, as we were then uncertain what had happened at Lexington, and knew [not*] that they had

*The context and the testimony of some of the surviving veterans incline me to think that this word was accidentally omitted.

R. W. E.

begun the quarrel there by firing upon our people, and killing eight men upon the spot. The three companies of troops soon quitted their post at the bridge, and retreated in the greatest disorder and confusion to the main body, who were soon upon the march to meet them. For half an hour, the enemy, by their marches and counter-marches, discovered great fickleness and inconstancy of mind; sometimes advancing, sometimes returning to their former posts, till at length they quitted the town, and retreated by the way they came. In the mean time, a party of our men (one hundred and fifty) took the back way, through the Great Fields, into the east quarter, and had placed themselves to advantage, lying in ambush behind walls, fences, and buildings, ready to fire upon the enemy on their retreat.